



Virginia Main Street Essentials

A Focus on Organization and Promotion

September 22 and 23, 2010 ♦ The Virginia Ballroom ♦ Abingdon, VA

Tuesday, Sept. 21

7 p.m.: Welcome Reception at A Tailor's Lodging B&B, 119 Park Street - Upon arriving, join your peers for casual networking and refreshments at a charming 1840's home located in the heart of Abingdon.

Wednesday, Sept. 22 – Organization

8:30 a.m.: Attendee Arrival – Over coffee and light refreshments we'll reconnect with colleagues from around the commonwealth.

9 a.m.: Welcome and Overview – Our Abingdon host Mayor Ed Morgan and Deputy Director of Community Development Lisa A. Atkinson will kick off the Essentials training, followed by Virginia Main Street's Kyle Meyer, who will provide a brief overview of the days ahead.

Morning sessions presented by Kathy LaPlante, National Trust Main Street Center

9:30 a.m.: Organization committee essentials – Building a solid foundation is critical to any organization's success. Learn the key components of organizational infrastructure and communicating your purpose in this session.

10:20 a.m.: Break

10:30 a.m.: Creative fundraising ideas - As purse strings tighten, you need alternative fund-raising strategies. This session will cover fund raising from the basics of running annual partnership campaigns to selling merchandise, from generating operational revenues through special events and sponsorships to conducting fund raisers.

11:20 a.m.: Break

11:30 a.m.: Volunteer development – It is a new day for volunteerism. In this session you will learn about growing trends, possible obstacles to recruiting new volunteers, generational differences, and how to celebrate their great work.

12:30 p.m.: Lunch on the town – Advance Abingdon will make sure your appetite for downtown is satisfied with local lunch recommendations.

Afternoon concurrent conversations – These interactive small group sessions will reinforce the VMS network, engaging both budding and mature Main Street programs. Both days, facilitators and co-leaders will help capture new ideas, share best practices and problem solve. A few of the sessions will be more presentation oriented (designated with *), but the experiences of your program will provide the content for all of these sessions.

Group 1

2 p.m.: Press relations nuts & bolts* – When and how do I write a press release and to whom should I send it? Tips on cultivating a positive press relationship and getting the coverage you want.

2:50 p.m.: Break

3 p.m.: Selling sponsorships* – Tired of constantly running to shakedown sponsors? Attract more money with less effort when you transform your sponsorship programs from selling ad space at events to developing long-term relationships that build downtown partners.

Group 2

Developing a fundraising plan – This session will focus on the best practices and procedures that should be in place for financial sustainability and evaluating your organizational needs.

Break

Board engagement and growth – An inspired group of volunteers with the motivation to make things happen in your downtown isn't a pipe dream, but building it takes a lot of patience and some essential structure and recognition.

3:50 p.m.: Break

Break

4:00 p.m.: **Connecting with youth and families** - Engaging youth is a great way to increase your program's volunteer base, and for them, giving time to the community provides a rewarding lesson. How can your organization engage these rising leaders?

Organization round table – This session is an opportunity to give a little more attention to unanswered questions about nonprofit management, volunteer attraction and fundraising.

5 p.m.: **Tour and Shop Downtown**

6:30 p.m.: **An outdoor dinner in downtown's Main Street Park** - Enjoy an outdoor dining experience by Nancy's Fancies that revolves around local foods and superb service in the heart of downtown Abingdon.

Thursday, Sept. 23 - Promotion

8 a.m.: **Attendee Arrival** – Over coffee and light refreshments attendees will have the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues from around the commonwealth.

Morning sessions presented by Kathy LaPlante, National Trust Main Street Center

8:30 a.m.: **Promotion committee essentials** –Kathy LaPlante will begin the day with an overview of the Promotion Committee's responsibilities as they relate to marketing and image building, retail and business promotions, and special events and festivals.

9:40 a.m.: **Making money from special events** – Sometimes special events strain your program's bank account, but they are crucial to creating a positive downtown image and attracting visitors. Gain a valuable understanding of the possibilities of your Main Street organization to simultaneously fund the mission and attract people to a fun downtown.

10:50 a.m.: **Retail promotions that work** - Are there ways to build support and involvement in promotional activities that will not only get people to come see what's happening on your main street, but also boost the bottom line for businesses? Yes, indeed!

Noon: Lunch - Stick around for lunch in-house with a conversation-starter assignment.

Afternoon concurrent conversations:

Group 1

1 p.m.: **Retail promotions** –Dig in further to Kathy's potent ideas in this session to help your retailers cook in this economy. And take advantage of priceless ideas from around Virginia that can help your own downtown merchants and make those cash registers ring.

1:50 p.m.: Break

2 p.m.: **Buy local campaigns** – “Buy independent/buy local” campaigns are spreading rapidly, and with good reason. Properly designed, these initiatives can enhance a community's economic and civic vitality by persuading residents to add downtown as a viable shopping choice.

Group 2

Developing a marketing plan* – A marketing strategy will help your program define the community's unique selling proposition to attract visitors and locals to downtown and design activities to achieve them. In this session we'll identify the necessary basics and explore beneficial outcomes.

Break

Strategic partnerships – During challenging economic times, it's essential to turn to one of your local assets, the community. By using strategic partnerships, your organization can create new opportunities to propel revitalization initiatives.

3 p.m.: **Adjourn and shop downtown**